WHITE HOUSE MEDITATIONS.

With a heart of woe in the White House I sit
And my thoughts on wind-swift pinions flit
To the place where beautiful, bright and wee,
Chuckles and crows my Baby McKee.
For all sweet words of tongue or pen
The sweetest are these, "Sweet Baby Ben."
And when cares come on like an angry sea,
My life preserver is Baby McKee.

When Corporal Tanner is making me sick,
And the G. A. R. is beginning to kick,
And Private Dalzell is piping hot,
And Foraker's mouth like a mighty grot
Yawns and yearns to swallow me up,
And I am pursued like an unclaimed pup,
And office-seekers call me N. G.,
O, then how I long for Baby McKee.

Baby McKee has marbles and strings;
And his pockets are full of all sorts of things.
He chases a hen at the top of his speed,
Or courses on his velocipede;
He spins a top and he flies a kite,
He plays and prattles from morning to night,
He is just as happy as happy can be.
O, I wish I were Baby McKee.

He doesn't have to shuffle and trim,
Nor have Wanamaker to prose to him,
Nor labor until his strength is spent,
To humor the better element;
He has all his time for fun and toys,
And doesn't have to kotow to the Boys.
If I were he and he were me,
How quick I'd change places with Baby McKee.

He doesn't have to take off his hat,
And come when he hears the call of Platt;
He doesn't feel goose flesh creep over him when
He hears of Alger or Gresham men;
He doesn't have to shake hands all day;
And hear what the delegations say.
I cannot help thinking, ah, me! ah, me!
What a pleasant time has Baby McKee.

If Baby McKee still thrives and grows,
I'll dress him up in jacket and hose;
And then as pretty as pretty can be
He shall serve as the page of some M. C.,
Though the pay is far too small to give
To such important relative;
And then no happier pair you'll see
Than Harrison and Baby McKee.

THE EVENT OF OUR LIVES.

My wife and I were a very happy couple. We loved each other, and we had two children, who were as pretty and healthy and nice-mannered as parents could wish. We were also rich, and when one has love and wealth, not counterbalanced by bad health or bad temper, one has pretty near everything that can render life delightful. We had, indeed, only one subject of complaint: sometimes we found existence a trifle monotonous.

"I think," my wife would say, yawning—"I really do think life is too uneventful. It is quite stupidly flat. Why doesn't something interesting happen?"

"Well, what should you like?" I would rejoin. "Shall I hire an assassin to stab me at the opera? or a gypsy to steal the children? or——"

"Nonsense!" cried she, laying her pretty hand on my lips. "Of course, I don't mean anything fearful and hideous like murder and kidnapping. I don't know what I mean; anything would do, so long as it was exciting and unusual."

"This, however, was the one thing in which I couldn't gratify her, for one can't buy unusual events by the ounce, or keep them bottled in one's cellar. So I tried to assuage her longing with philosophy.

"We are both young," I said. "Who knows what may happen before we keep our golden wedding? We must wait."

"Wait!" exclaimed my wife. "Yes, the end of the world is coming, but we shan't live to see it."

Time, however, proved that I was right. One day she received the following letter from her only brother on Australia:

My Dear Lucy: I have just nursed back to life after a long and dangerous brain fever, my great friend, George Stormont, and as the doctors concur in saying a sea-voyage is the best thing for him, I meant to put him on board the Mount Vernon on the 28th, and ship him off to England. His only relation, a married sister, lives in Scotland, so I am desiring him to go straight to you, as I am sure you will be willing to put him up for a short time till he is equal to a long railway journey, and I feel confident you and Frank will pay him all the attention you can for my sake."

"If he recovers on the voyage, you will find him sociable and agreeable and up to everything, but the doctors tell me that he may not be quite himself for some months, and if so, you will see him as he is now—a silent individual, rather eccentric, preferring solitude, and always mooning about the place and wandering into rooms where he has no business. But one must excuse the vagaries of an invalid, and I trust that you and Frank will bear with him, as I said before, for my sake.

"No more now, as I am busy with my usual avocations, and extra busy looking after Stormont. With much love to you all, ever your affectionate brother.

Edgar Arrowsmith.

"P. S.—Stormont will arrive a fortnight after this letter."

He came, however, that evening. We were astonished, but we hastened to welcome him, and found him in the study—a small, spare man, with a short dark beard, and cropped black hair. He rose slowly from the easy chair in which he was seated, and looked at us foolishly.

"We are very glad to see you, Mr. Stormont," said I, taking his hand. "How are you? Better, I hope?"

"Not much," said he in a wearied tone, and putting his hand on his head.

"Country air will soon set you up," said I. "How did you leave Edgar?"

"Edgar wrote you were coming by the Mount Vermont, but surely she isn't in yet?" remarked Lucy.

"I got off earlier than I had dared to hope," said Stormont. "In the Monte Rosa there was a berth, and it was thought better that I should not delay."

"That was the mail that brought Edgar's letter?" said Lucy.

"Yes," said Stormont.

After that he relapsed into silence, and we could could only extract monosyllabic answers from him. We saw that he was fatigued, and I presently showed him to his rooms—two apartments on the ground floor, which Lucy's thoughtfulness had provided.

"My wife fancied you might like to be saved the stairs," I said.

He thanked me warmly.

"It was very kind of Lady Dennis," he said. "I sleep badly, and often take a walk in the early morning, so this will suit me exactly, as I shall be able to leave the house without disturbing anyone."

"Take care none of my servants mistake you for a burglar," said I, laughing.

"Oh, they won't do that," he returned, with a smile.

So I left him, and as he was very quiet and taciturn, and his brain evidently still extremely weak, Lucy and I found that his presence made very little difference to us.

"Don't mind me," he said the next day. "I feel exhausted, and conversation tires me. But I am not ill, and you will please me best and serve me most if you will let me go my own way and not concern yourselves about me."

So we left him to follow his own devices, and as he preferred to have his meals in his own room we saw very little of him.

"It's too bad," Lucy said to me. "I did not think Mr. Stormount would have been an exciting element. I hoped we should have had the house crowded with nurses and brain specialists, and that perhaps he would have gone suddenly mad, and you would have restrained him in some heroic manner. Instead of which he is as humdrum as possible. At least he might have gone a little crazy."

"Well, he may yet," said I. "He has only been here a week to-day."

That evening Johnson demanded an interview of me.

"Well, Johnson?" I said to this old and faithful domestic.

"I'm not easy about Mr. Stormont, Sir Francis," said Johnson, carefully looking over his shoulder, though he had as carefully closed the door behind him when he entered.

"What about Mr. Stormont?" I inquired.

"He's an uncommonly queer gantleman, Sir Francis," replied Johnson. "Several nights I've found him wandering about my pantry, and yesterday he frightened Mrs. Rowe out of her wits by coming in when she and me was holding a confidential communication in the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Rowe's heart is weak, Sir Francis."

I couldn't help smiling, for it was no secret where the weakness in Mrs. Rowe's heart tended.

"What explanation did Mr Stormont offer?" I asked.

"None, Sir Francis," said Johnson. "He put his hand to his head and looked bewildered; and then went off. He's been caught up stairs by the girls just the same, and Jane met him at your dressing room door. And it makes it worse because he walks so soft. We ain't none of us angry with the poor gentleman, Sir Francis, but we think he's stark mad, and we think there'll be murder if he ain't looked sharp after."

"I hope not, Johnson," I said. "This is just what Mr. Arrowsmith prepared us for; his words were: 'He goes mooning about the place, and wandering into rooms where he has no business.' I can't turn my brother-in-law's friend out of my house because he's odd."

"I hope nothing may come of it, Sir Francis," said Johnson solemnly.

"I trust not," said I. "Mr. Stormont will go soon. Meantime, don't let any one frighten her Ladyship. There is nothing murderous in a tendency to poke into strange places."

Nevertheless, I felt somewhat uneasy and watched my guest narrowly. But there was nothing in his demeanor to warrant my apprehensions, and I presently forgot Johnson's revelations, and ceased to lie awake of nights listening for sudden shrieks.

Stormont had been with us a fortnight when we went to a ball at the Duke of Bengal's. Lucy donned her diamonds and I thought she looked very beautiful in them and told her so. I was just kissing her when we suddenly found that Stormont was in the room. Lucy blushed prettily at being caught in her husband's arms, and I daresay I grew hot.

"We are going to a ball," I stammered. "I was just telling my wife her diamonds became her."

"So I heard," said Stormont. "May I look at your diamonds, Lady Dennis?"

He approached and gazed admiringly at her necklace and earrings.

"Beautiful!" he said several times. "Diamonds of the first water! I know something about diamonds; my great-uncle was a diamond merchant."

"If you were going with us you would see far finer diamonds than mine," said Lucy. "The Duchess has diamonds that are absolutely priceless, and such a quantity! She has them sewn on her dress, and two detectives always close to her."

"I wonder she dares walk about in such precious things," observed Stormont. "At large parties it is impossible to say what bad characters may not slip in."

"Well, as a matter of fact, she doesn't walk about," said Lucy. "A few years ago she hurt her spine out hunting, and she is always on the sofa."

"Wouldn't you like to come with us, my dear fellow?" said I.

"Thank you, I think not," he replied plaintively; "I should like it, but I fear the noise and heat would hurt my head. Thank you, Lady Dennis, for letting me see your treasures. I hope you keep them carefully?"

"Oh, yes! Frank keeps them in his strong box, and when we travel, they go to the bank" she replied. "Frank will lock them up to morrow as safe as a church."

"To-morrow—not till to-morrow?" exclaimed Stormont in a horrified voice.

"No," said she; "why should he tire himself? Nobody could take them out of our room."

At this moment the carriage was announced, and I carried Lucy off. It was a good ball, and the duchess lay in state, covered with superb diamonds, and watched by acute and intelligent functionaries. In the course of the evening a gentleman like stranger, with a long fair beard and rather long fair hair, addressed me and asked if I could point out Sir Francis Dennis. I told him that I was the gentleman in question, and he bowed courteously.

"You will excuse the liberty I took," he said, "but I believe my old friend, George Stormont, is staying with you. I only heard of his whereabouts to-day, and at cockcrow I start for the Continent, or I should have called to see him. Perhaps you will say that you met Col. L'Estrange."

I was pleased with the colonel's manner, and we entered into conversation, and after a time he begged me to present him to the duchess. This I did willingly, knowing that the poor duchess's chief pleasure lay in talking with agreeable people, and after that I lost sight of him.

It was late when we left, and on reaching home we found Stormont walking in the drive smoking. He followed the carriage quickly and helped Lucy to alight, and we stood talking in the hall for a few minutes.

"And the duchess and her diamonds?" inquired Stormont presently.

"The duchess and her diamonds were all there," said I. By the way, Stormont, I met an old friend of yours, a Col. L'Estrange, and I introduced him to the duchess, who, I understand, was charmed with him."

"He is a very nice fellow," said Stormont; "quite a ladies man. I wonder what he was doing there? However, I mustn't keep you, Lady Dennis; you look tired."

We went up stairs, and, as asual, Lucy's diamonds were left on her dressing-table. We had done this so repeatedly that it never occurred to us to do differently, notwithstanding the astonishment that Stormont had expressed. But we committed the indiscretion once too often. The next morning Lucy's exquisite diamonds were gone.

An unusual event had happened at last, but it was too serious for joking. Lucy was too miserable to get up, and at length I left her to her maid and went down to breakfast alone, pondering what steps I should taks. I had hardly poured out my coffee when Stormont came in. He held an open letter in his hand, and seemed quite alert and cheerful.

"Good morning," he began eagerly. "I've heard from my sister. She is in London; has come up on purpose to meet me and wants me to join her to-day."

"Indeed," said I absently. "Your sister—Mrs. Macdonald—in town—eh!"

Stormont looked at me surprised.

"Anything the matter?" he said. "Lady Dennis not well?"

"Well, yes, something is the matter," said I. "Something deucedly disagreeable has happened. My wife's diamonds have been stolen."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Stormont.

He was so taken aback that he literally fell into a chair and sat there staring at me.

"Those diamonds?" he said at last. "Those splendid diamonds? I have no words. Did you lock them up?"

"No," I replied, "I've been a confounded fool. But the diamonds were close to us and we don't sleep heavily."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked Stormont.

"No one," I said. "All my servants have been with me so long. Some one must have been secreted in the house"

"And what are you going to do?" he asked. "Can I do anything in town? I must go up by the 3:15."

We discussed the subject all the morning, and Stormont's indignant interest was very consolatory, and when Lucy appeared, she was greatly cheered by his sympathy and hopefulness. He was certain that the rogues would be taken and the diamonds recovered.

"You are very sanguine," said she. "You seem quite well to-day, Mr. Stormont."

"I feel much better," he replied. "Joy is a fine doctor, and the expectation of seeing my sister has made another man of me. Then this atrocious burglary excites me to a pitch I can't describe. Laddy Dennis, you must recover your diamonds. I shall run down on Saturday to hear the news. A talk will be so much more satisfactory than letters."

I drove Stormont to the station. By his advice I had not called in the local police, but telegraphed to London for a detective, and I should meet him by a train which would arrive soon after the 3:15 departed.

"By the way," said Stormont, as we stood waiting on the platform, "about Col. L'Estrange—what was he like?"

"About your height," I said. "Thin and fair, with a long beard and longish hair—not military looking at all."

A very peculiar expression came over Stormont's face, and he whistled softly.

"My dear fellow," he said, "that's your burglar! How these rascals get to know things passes my comprehension, but somehow they do. I have a friend—a Col. L'Estrange—but he is stout and extremely dark, and wears a moustache only. Depend upon it, that fellow hoaxed you. I wonder he didn't pay his attention to the duchess's diamonds also."

So he had. A gentleman came up at the moment, and after shaking hands said excitedly:

"Heard the news, Dennis?"

"Only my own, Shaw," I replied dismally. "My wife's diamonds have been stolen."

"By Jove!" cried Shaw. "And the duchess lost twenty of her finest diamonds last night—cut off her dress—while the detectives stood by."

We told him about L'Estrange, and he listened with interest.

"We think it is a celebrated burglar of the name of Paxton, alias Grub," he said lowering his voice. "That's what the police think. They say no other man could have done it."

"I thought Paxton was safely out of the way," said Stormont. "Surely I remember hearing of him when I was a lad. Wasn't he concerned in the great diamond robbery of Gray Towers in '69?"

"He was," replied Shaw, "but he's on the loose again now, and the police have been watching him. A fortnight ago Mrs. Howard lost her dressing-bag, with £2,000 worth of jewels in it. Paxton was suspected and traced to Canterbury, then gave his pursuers the slip and disappeared."

He has probably been lying perdu in the neighborhood," said Stormont, as the train came up. "Dennis write to me at Morley's if I can help you in the least. Au revoir till Saturday. Thank you beyond words for all your kindness."

That evening as we sat at dinner Mr. Stormont was announced. I rushed out. But the Stormont who stood before me, with Edgar Arrowsmith's letter in his hand, was not the man who had gone to town that afternoon. In a moment I had realized the truth. Stormont the first was Paxton the burglar.

Certainly a very uncommon thing had happened at last, and when Paxton was caught it all came out—how he had robbed Mrs. Howard, and, hiding in my grounds, had heard Lucy read her brother's letter aloud—how, as Col. L'Estrange, under cover of my introduction, he had robbed the duchess—how, as he stood on the platform talking of the burglary, the duchess' diamonds and Lucy's were actually on his person. There was no doubt that Paxton had been superlatively clever, and in my admiration for his talents and my sorrow that they were put to such ill uses, I forgave his chuckling over his delight at having "gammoned that fool Sir Francis."

My dear wife never sighs for extraordinary events now; we both think we have had enough of them now. We are as happy as ever, for burglars cannot take away love and children, and good health and sweet temper. But we are happy minus the diamonds, for Paxotn got them abroad before he was caught. I wanted to give Lucy some more, but she wouldn't let me.

"I couldn't bear the responsibility again," she said. "Give them by and by to Baby's wife."

As for the duke, he never wearies of chaffing me, and calling me Col. L'Estrange's confederate.—London Society.